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POPE/SHOOTING

PALMER: Well, tonight, there is more evidence to support charges that Mehmet Ali Agca, the man who shot Pope John Paul, did not act alone. Marvin Kalb has been looking into this.

KALB: May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul II, shot twice in St. Peter's Square. Mehmet Ali Agca, a notorious Turkish gunman, was instantly seized, tried and convicted. Was he part of an international conspiracy, and if so, who ran him? NBC News has obtained a copy of the top secret report of the Italian state prosecutor, Antonio Albanno, summarizing a 20-month-long investigation. Its major conclusion, that the Bulgarian secret services contracted with Agca for the organization and execution of the murder plan. But the Bulgarians, then as now, denied any involvement. After all, why would they want to kill this pope? The prosecutor's report provides answers and a wealth of backup detail. The pope is Polish, and his controversial role in the creation of Solidarity in August 1980 sent shudders through the communist empire of eastern Europe. A Polish crisis so dramatic, the report says, that eliminating the pope and labor leader Lech Walesa was considered necessary. It was at this time that Agca showed up in Sofia, the Bulgarian capitol, and met with *Todar Ivasov, an agent of the Bulgarian secret service. The report says they discussed an attempt on the pontiff's life in the spring of 1981. The report also says that Agca followed Lech Walesa very closely during his trip to the Vatican in January '81, but for reasons still unclear, the plot against Walesa fizzled out and died, but not the one against the pope. The report cites a number of planning sessions with Agca, the three Bulgarians--*Ivasov, *Jelu Vasilev, and *Sergei Antonov--and two other Turks, *Oro Chelek, who was seen in St. Peter's Square holding a gun, and *Becker Chelig, who got the Bulgarians to give Agca 3 million West German marks to do the job. Less than a year ago, Agca, in broken English, identified his accomplices. AGCA: ...Sergei Antonov was with me during (sic) attempt. UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER: Ivasov? Ivasov? AGCA: Yes, yes, yes. Ivasov and *Colyev.

KALB: Colyev was Vasilev's code name. He and Ivasov had fled to Bulgaria. A trial is now expected to start in Rome this fall. U.S. and Italian experts say the evidence cited in this report is very persuasive, but because the Italian judges do not have the actual Bulgarian order to assassinate the pope, there is a question about whether they can get a conviction. Marvin Kalb, NBC News, the State Department.